

March 2021

Dear Resident

What a roller coaster of a year we have had. When I was writing this message last year there was absolutely no indication of what was in store for all of us. Never in our wildest dreams would we have thought that a virus could cause such devastation and heartache amongst the residents of Woodley. The impact on residents who have lost relatives and friends is immense and almost everyone has been affected in one way or another. The hit on businesses who have had to shut will last for some time to come and has a direct impact on their employees.

But where there is despondency there is always hope. The caring spirit of Woodley residents has been immense and second to none. From the 1,500 strong Woodley Volunteers for Covid, to the Woodley Food Bank, to the nearly 200 residents who have adopted a road to look out for those who live there, to the "going on a Bear Hunt" team trying to cheer up children from the boredom of lock down and the countless others across this great town of ours where literally hundreds of people have stepped forward and said "how can I help?" On behalf of the Town Council can I say a heartfelt thank you to each and every one of you. You make Woodley a great place to live.

The Town Council has not been immune from these difficulties and has lost a huge amount of income making it extremely difficult to balance the books. Through prudent building up the reserves over the last eight years we have been able to mitigate the worst of this financial loss. But once the reserves have been spent, they are not there to be used again to ease any future financial crisis.

When we were going through the process of setting the budget, we set ourselves four key aims we wanted to fulfil. First to avoid any redundancies, second to avoid any reduction in services, third to maintain all grants to charities and finally to keep any increase to the bare minimum. In order to do this, we needed to understand what residents' views were in terms of any increase as that directly impacted the other two key aims. The consultation on this had a tremendous response with one in five households sending back their views.

We listened to what you had to say and acted upon it, resulting in a rise of 56p per month, significantly lower than what residents' responses said they could accept. Can I say a big thank you to everyone who participated.

Councillor Keith Baker MBE, Leader of the Council



The Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley RG5 4JZ

0118 9690356 www.woodley.gov.uk

Woodley Town Council is your local council providing local services to you. The Town Council offices are based at the Oakwood Centre. Over the past eleven months the offices have been closed with members of our office team working remotely.

You can still contact the Council on 0118 9690356 regarding any issues or enquires you have - or you can go to our website at www.woodley.gov.uk for more information.

Virtual meetings recommenced from June 2020 onwards - members of the public are able to view in real-time or watch the recordings of meetings on the Council's YouTube site.

Over the year the Grounds Maintenance team have been making sure that the parks and sports areas are well tended and we have noticed that many more people are using Woodford Park, both during lockdowns and in general. We are also very pleased to announce that Woodley Town Council has, for the third year running, maintained its Green Flag status. The international award is a sign to the public that our park boasts the highest possible environmental standards, is beautifully maintained and has excellent visitor facilities. Past and present members of our Grounds Maintenance team and the Friends of Woodford Park have all contributed to creating a wonderful green space in our town.

Work to improve the Grounds and Maintenance teams' Depot area is ongoing, although the loss of electricity supply to the

buildings in November has caused some problems. A new supply is due to be installed shortly.

Our Maintenance team have ensured that all our premises were weather and watertight and that any problems with our buildings or facilities were dealt with quickly.

We have now received tenders for a new 'destination' play area to replace and extend the existing playground behind the Oakwood Centre. This will be funded from £200,000 of funds from Section 106 contributions made by developers relating to the building of new homes in Woodley. We will be consulting with residents on the scheme design and equipment, which will have a focus on inclusivity.

Some of our other projects have had to be put on hold because of the pandemic, for example, the art project and parkour (or Freerunning) under the A3290 on Loddon Bridge Road.

Income from the hiring of the Oakwood Centre, activities at Woodford Park Leisure Centre and bookings at Coronation and Chapel Halls was severely reduced from March 2019 onwards and has led to the Council allocating some of its reserves to meet income losses.

In 2020 the Town Council took ownership of Malone Park which was transferred to the Town Council from Wokingham Borough Council.



In 2021/22 we plan to:

- appoint a company to build the 'destination' play area in the park, following consultation with residents
- increase income levels as much as possible - this depends on buildings and facilities being able to open and remain accessible
- make grant awards to Readibus, Keep Mobile, ARC youth counselling, Citizens Advice and the Link Visiting Scheme
- establish a new Service Level Agreement to support young people in the town
- complete the works at the Grounds and Maintenance depot
- plant wild flowers at Woodford Park
- re-roofing of Woodford Park Leisure Centre
- set out the town centre community garden - once works to thin out the trees is completed

Some of these plans will depend on the impact of the pandemic.

Summary of the services the Town Council provides (subject to Government guidelines):

Meeting places

The Oakwood Centre on Headley Road is home of the Town Council offices as well as the Alan Cornish Theatre, a café (run by Brown Bag), a base in the town for the neighbourhood police and a popular venue for business meetings, parties and other social and community events.

Coronation Hall and Chapel Hall are also available for hire. A large number of community groups meet in our halls.

Discounted rates for hall and room hire are available for Woodley residents.

Open spaces

Parks and open spaces – 28 acres of parkland at Woodford Park, play areas at Malone Park, the Memorial Ground and Wheble Park, as well as open spaces at Loddon Mead and Bulmershe Park.

The Garden of Remembrance in Woodford Park is a peaceful place, valued by many who wish to remember their loved ones. To find out about having an inscribed plaque in the garden, call the Town Council offices.

Allotments

Over the past few years the Council has opened up 100 new plots at the Reading Road site in response to the increase in local people wanting to grow their own produce. If you are interested in renting an allotment contact the Town Council offices or complete an online form available on our website.

Representation

The Town Council speaks for Woodley on many matters and in response to consultations – national and local. Our Planning and Community Committee also lets residents know about planning applications near them and we pass comments from these meetings to Wokingham Borough Council, where the decisions on planning matters are made.

All Woodley residents are very welcome at the Town Forum, held before each meeting of Full Council. This is an opportunity to meet your Councillors in person and ask questions or make representations on issues of importance to you. The meetings in 2021/22 will be held at 8.00pm on the following dates:

11 May, 22 June, 28 September, 7 December and 8 February (2022).

Sports and recreation

Woodford Park Leisure Centre – fitness gym, 3rd generation artificial grass pitch, badminton courts, tennis, bowling green, grass football pitches, cricket field (artificial and grass wickets), keep fit courses, holiday sports camps and function and committee rooms for hire.

Our young people

The Council provides support to young people and outreach youth work in the town through a service level agreement (currently being revised), and ARC, a youth counselling service, which operates locally from the Oakwood Centre. We also have a Community Youth Partnership, bringing organisations working with young people together to pursue youth centred projects.

Community Grants

Grants of up to £250 to organisations and community groups and grants of up to £100 for individuals under 21 who are excelling in sport or cultural activities and bringing credit to the town are considered twice a year – see our website for information on qualifying for a grant and application forms to download or apply online.



Local economy

The Town Council is a partner in the Woodley Town Centre Management Initiative, which promotes the centre and organises events - the Farmers' Markets, the Winter Extravaganza, Saturday Music in the summer and the popular Saturday Market.

In addition - the Friends of Woodford Park, a voluntary group of residents, continues to grow and their flower beds at the Memorial Ground and in the area behind the Oakwood Centre have been beautifully maintained throughout the year. If you would like to find out more about the Friends of Woodford Park email fowpwoodley@mail.com.

Find out more about your town and your council at www.woodley.gov.uk and in the newsletter published three times a year and delivered to all households.

The Town Council's Financial Statements and Auditor's report for 2019/20 are available on our website.

Woodley Town Council

The Oakwood Centre

Headley Road, Woodley RG5 4JZ

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Email: admin@woodley.gov.uk

Woodley Town Council Budget Estimates 2021/22

Budget Estimates 2020/21				Budget Estimates 2021/22			
Income	Expenditure	Net Exp		Income	Expenditure	Net Exp	
264594	975346	710752	Strategy and Resources	154089	912295	758206	
497693	677624	179931	Leisure Services	225854	623694	397840	
	33093	33093	Planning & Community Services		33422	33422	
			Furlough Income	50000	0	-50000	
	311506	311506	Capital and Projects		264980	264980	
762287	1997569	1235282	Total Revenue Exp/Income	429943	1834391	1404448	
Reserves estimated to cover loss of income		122755					
Estimated furlough income		186179					

Budget Summary 2021/22	
Estimated opening balance 1 April 2021	468963
Precept	1293034
Less: Net Expenditure Budget 2021/22	1404448
Budgeted balance as at 31 March 2022	357549
Reserves allocated to cover lost income:	111414

In 2021/22 the Band D property charge will increase to £119.65